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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, AUGUST 18, 2006

#### In Today's Papers

##### Debate over Turkish Troops to Lebanon

All papers: Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) Spokesman Namik Tan said at a weekly press briefing that no decision has been taken with regard to the deployment of Turkish troops to South Lebanon as part of a UN peacekeeping force. "If Turkey sends troops, it will only be for humanitarian and logistical purposes," Tan stated, stressing that Turkish soldiers would not be tasked with disarming Hezbollah. Tan said the government was debating the issue with military officials and regional countries. Sabah reports Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul as warning that Turkey would have a serious "prestige problem" if it abstains from taking part in the international force for Lebanon. "Being the successor of the Ottoman Empire that has controlled the region for centuries, and the strongest state of the Middle East, Turkey might have serious prestige problems if it abstains from sending troops to Lebanon. Sending troops to Lebanon would be the right thing for everybody to do," Gul told the press in Ankara on his return from Lebanon yesterday. The main opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal said "Turkey must give priority to the elimination of PKK terrorism instead of dealing with the situation in Lebanon. First of all, we must control our own border."

Cumhuriyet says the Turkish military was right in believing Turkey should not hurry to participate in an international force for Lebanon while Arab countries were hesitant to do so. Papers say Turkish troops in Lebanon should only work to reinforce stability and distribute humanitarian aid. Yeni Safak reports Turkey was planning to send between 600-800 soldiers to Lebanon as well as doctors, nurses, veterinary specialists, and imams. Zaman says although Americans respected Turkish conditions for joining the international Lebanon force, they still insist that Turkey's participation was necessary.

Mark Malloch Brown, UN Deputy Secretary-General, said Turkey has

expressed a willingness to contribute to the international force for Lebanon. Brown noted the peacekeeping contingency would be a "Muslim-European" one. Lebanese Prime Minister Siniora invited Turkish soldiers to Lebanon, saying even the Armenian minister in his cabinet backed the idea of Turkish peacekeepers in the country.

Ali Bulac, commenting in the Islamist-oriented Zaman urges Turkey to "keep its distance" from the "chamber of fire" that is Lebanon: "It is not clear that the so-called ceasefire in Lebanon will hold. Even if it holds for a while, if the US and Israel don't give up their plans, they will attack Iran and Syria in the end. It is a well-known fact that Israel was preparing to attack Lebanon for months and the US had knowledge of this plan. Israel wasn't able to eliminate Hezbollah with this war, on the contrary, Hezbollah managed to strengthen its power. This brings us to the conclusion that Hezbollah is going to attack Israel if there is an attack on Syria or Iran. Where does Turkey stand in case of such an attack? Turkey should carefully consider the reasons why the US and Israel are insistently asking Turkey to send troops to Lebanon. Israel aims to use the UN force to eliminate Hezbollah. Turkey should do its best to keep its distant from this chamber of fire."

Israel Asks Turkey to Block Arms Flow to Hezbollah  
Radikal cites a Reuters report in which a senior Israeli security source said on Thursday that Israel has asked Ankara to impose an air and land embargo to prevent Iranian weapons from being funneled to Hezbollah in Lebanon through Turkish territories. The source said the arms traffic through Turkey was important as other routes for arms transfer to Hezbollah through Jordan and Iraq had been cut off. The source said a successful implementation of the international arms embargo would determine the success of the UN effort in Lebanon. Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) Spokesman Namik

ANKARA 00004835 002 OF 003

Tan said Turkey would not allow illegal arms transfers, underlining that Turkey would make its own decision regarding Israeli demands for embargo. Tan also confirmed a Hurriyet report on Wednesday that Iranian planes had been forced to land at Diyarbakir airport on July 27 and on August 8 on suspicion that they were carrying arms, but that no military equipment was found.

Reaction to US Call for PKK to Disarm  
All papers: Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) Spokesman Namik Tan, commenting on a statement recently released by the US State Department calling on the PKK to disarm, said, "We expect concrete action regarding the PKK rather than statements on what we already know," Tan said. Tan added that talks with the PKK were not possible even if the terrorists decide to abide by the US call. Cumhuriyet reports Tan also said it was Turkey who had asked the US to name a special PKK coordinator.

Hasan Mesut Hazar commenting from Washington in the conservative-nationalist daily Turkiye, argues that the US needs to "eliminate the PKK" as soon as possible: "It is difficult to understand why the US acts this slowly on the PKK issue when the US and Israel are bombing all the settlements in Lebanon and Iraq, using as an excuse that they are potential future threats. Of course, it will be in Turkey's benefit to fight against the PKK in coordination with the trilateral mechanism (Turkey, the US and Iraq). However, it is very disappointing for the US to delay the start of this mechanism. In order to improve the strategic partnership, the Turkey-US relationship, coordination on the Greater Middle East Project, and coordination in countering global terrorism, the US should eliminate the PKK as soon as possible. Otherwise the increasing anger toward the US in the Turkish public is going to have a serious effect on world peace."

Germany to Send Syriac Immigrants Back to Turkey  
Radikal reports some 10,000 Syriacs who had been granted temporary asylum in Germany faced deportation to Turkey. Saliba Ozmen, the Metropolitan of Deyrulzaferan Monastery in Mardin in southeast Turkey, said Germany had granted temporary residence for the Syriacs until peace and stability were restored in Turkey, and now was sending the migrants back home due to the improving conditions in the region.

TV Highlights  
NTV (8 a.m.)

#### Domestic News

- The Turkish government and civil servant labor unions fail to agree in the second round of collective bargaining talks on Thursday.
- Turkey's National Security Council (MGK) is to convene on August 21 to discuss the situation in the Middle East, developments in northern Iraq, and the fight against terrorism.
- Earthquakes which hit Turkey between 1976 and 2005 cost the country USD 8.5 billion. The biggest natural disaster logistics support center in Europe and the Middle East has been opened in Istanbul.
- Ankara leads Turkish cities in terms of domestic violence with 10 percent of women in the Turkish capital beaten or killed by their husbands.

#### International News

- Hezbollah is providing a year's rent and new furniture for every family whose house has been destroyed by the Israeli attacks in south Lebanon.

ANKARA 00004835 003 OF 003

- The Armenian party in Lebanon, holding six seats in the parliament, expressed opposition in a statement to participation of Turkish troops in the prospective peacekeeping force for Lebanon.
- President Ahmadinejad said Iran would not give up its right to continue nuclear enrichment work.

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